Interview with Seth P. Tillman

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

DR. SETH P. TILLMAN

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy

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Q: On behalf of the Foreign Affairs Oral History Studies, I am Charles Stuart Kennedy. I wonder if we could start with your early years; you were born in 1930. Tell me a little about your background. Where you went to school.

TILLMAN: Well, I grew up in Springfield, Massachusetts, more or less uneventfully. I went to public school and high school there. My father was a small businessman. My mother had no career except that she was an amateur musician and a singer. Then I went on to Syracuse University for undergraduate school and actually did a fifth year for a Masters Degree there.

Q: What field were you in?

TILLMAN: I was in an education program, it was called Social Studies Education, I was thinking I might go into secondary teaching although I did not do that. I was in a five year program that resulted in a Masters Degree in Social Studies Education. I was then in the United States army for 2 years right after that.

Q: Was this the Korean War time?

TILLMAN: Yes, but I wasn't in Korea. I did basic training in what was then called Camp Chaffee, which became Fort Chaffee, Arkansas. Getting what was to be a very long association with the state of Arkansas but I didn't know that at the time. We then trained at Fort Bragg, N.C. on the 280 millimeter “atomic” cannon.

Q: When you were dealing with these weapons, what did you think about firing them in a war, did you wonder which way the winds are going to be blowing or something like that?

TILLMAN: I can't remember that I ever gave very serious thought to that. I was a kid out of college, reluctantly in the army and waiting to get out to go to graduate school. I had no strong convictions on it, I thought the thing was useless.

I was an enlisted man, I worked for an S-2 captain in intelligence. We used to go on these trips to evaluate roads and culverts and see if we could get this contraption around corners. The device we used was a string, 8 feet long, we'd just unravel it and hold it taut. He'd hold one end and I'd hold the other, we'd see if we could maneuver the corner.

These trips were actually very pleasant; you'd have the occasion to go up and down the Moselle Valley and see all kinds of nice scenery. I'd never been anywhere in my life very far away from home except for college. It was my first trip abroad and I spent the year in Germany. I welcomed the 3-day passes and the leave time to travel around Europe. I can't say that I made any particular contribution to the military but I had a pretty good time.

Q: I was an enlisted man in the early 50s in Europe too, it was fun.

You say you came back and went to graduate school. Where did you go, what course did you take and where were you pointed at?

TILLMAN: When I came back, I took the year off and didn't do much of anything except give my family some concern that I was drifting aimlessly. I applied to the Fletcher School

the following year starting in the fall of 1955. Then I remained there until '59, getting first a Masters Degree then a Ph.D.

Q: What attracted you to Fletcher? Fletcher is not where you go for secondary education.

TILLMAN: I was mainly interested in foreign affairs and international relations. As an undergraduate I don't know if I was all that serious. I was taking courses and selecting a major without giving a lot of close and careful attention to what I was going to do with it.

But while I was out, I became persuaded that I wanted to work in the field of international affairs. I wasn't too sure whether I wanted to be an academic or possibly go into the Foreign Service or some other operational area. I applied to Fletcher and was lucky enough to get in.

Q: You were in Fletcher when to when, since you went for a Masters and a Ph.D., 4 or 5 years or so?

TILLMAN: I started in the fall of '55 and got a Masters Degree which was then a one-year Masters Degree in the spring of '56. Then I did my additional course work, took oral exams, did a dissertation and finished in '59.

Q: What was your field, your dissertation on?

TILLMAN: I worked on European and American diplomatic history. My dissertation had the ponderous title of “Anglo-American Relations at the Paris Peace Conference of 1919.” I subsequently rewrote it, submitted to Princeton University Press, and they published it in 1961.

Q: When you were at Fletcher, this is a period when the United States was the preeminent power in world affairs. What would be sort of the attitude of the students coming through there, where were they headed and how were they seeing the American role?

TILLMAN: It's hard to reconstruct attitudes of almost 40 years ago. A good many of them were heading for the Foreign Service. In those days most of the Fletcher students stayed one year and got an MA and went on to the Foreign Service or into some area in the private sector. In much the same way that they still do, like the students do here at Georgetown.

There again, I had no definite plan. It was almost circumstantial that during the course of my first year, one of my professors, Norman Padelford, who was Chairman of the Political Science Department at MIT, asked me if I'd like to have a part-time teaching job starting my second year at Fletcher. I said I certainly would, I didn't even have to think about it.

And I started teaching at MIT as a part-time instructor in the Fall of 1956. Teaching undergraduate courses in international relations and then I taught a course in American government, and then I taught a course on Nationalism and National Development—that was the title of it.

I was at MIT first as a part-time instructor, then a full-time instructor, then as assistant professor until the Spring of 1960. That, of course, overlapped with my being a student at Fletcher which ended in the Spring of 1959.

Then I wanted to wander around a little bit. That, in effect, decided my career course. I guess in a way Norman Padelford decided for me by offering a teaching job. I got involved in academics and forgot about doing anything else, at least for the foreseeable future.

But I applied to the American Political Science Association for a Congressional Fellowship. Actually, I applied 2 years in a row, the first year I didn't get it. The second year I did get it. I also applied for and got a Fulbright grant to teach abroad. I had a lot of trouble deciding which to take.

I finally decided to come to Washington as a Congressional Fellow. I spent the year, 1960-61, in Washington on this internship program which at the time was accorded to

journalists as well as young academics. Since then, I think it's been expanded to include State Department people and other people from the Executive branch in government. But I don't think there were any at the time.

Q: That came a little later. Who did you work for?

TILLMAN: In the House side, I worked for John Lindsay of New York, later Mayor of New York. He was then still a Republican congressman from the east side of Manhattan. I really enjoyed it, I had a wonderful time.

Q: He was sort of the Republican Kennedy, wasn't he?

TILLMAN: Yes.

Q: Very charismatic and very good-looking.

TILLMAN: He was very nice to me and gave me interesting jobs to do, we had dinners together and talked about the Congress. His wife was still living in New York so he was kind of on the loose on weeknights. We'd go to Georgetown restaurants and talk about what was going on, usually with other members of the staff. I just had some interesting assignments and I felt very privileged.

Then on the second half of that fellowship, I went to the Senate. Largely, thanks to John Lindsay, I got an appointment with Senator Fulbright. He immediately asked me to write him a speech for a lecture he was giving up at Cornell University. We seemed to connect. I then came on the Foreign Relations Committee staff as an intern. But primarily writing speeches for Senator Fulbright.

He then asked me if I was interested in staying with the Committee, I said I was. I got another year's postponement before returning to MIT although, in fact, I never did return.

After I finished the internship, without even moving desks or offices, I went on the staff of the Foreign Relations Committee and remained there for the next 16 years.

Q: Did you catch this intern thing, any difference on say the Foreign Relations side at all when you were with John Lindsay? Did you have anything to do with foreign relations or was that domestic?

TILLMAN: We did some work on foreign relations. I remember doing a project for Lindsay on tourism. I can't remember very much about it but promoting tourism in the United States. There were undoubtedly other projects in the foreign affairs field but I don't remember what they were.

Q: With Senator Fulbright, when you came on board this would be 1961. What was his position on the Senate at that time?

TILLMAN: He'd become Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee in 1959. He remained Chairman until he left office at the end of 1974.

Q: How was he regarded by the Foreign Relations staff when you first came on board?

TILLMAN: He was esteemed very highly by the Foreign Relations Committee staff as he continued to be throughout his tenure. Here again we had the feeling of being privileged to be associated with a senator of real stature and distinction. He had a wonderful appetite for information and for ideas.

One of the things he started doing—which early on spooked me, but I got used to it—he'd get you on the telephone, without any particular issue in mind, he'd just say: “Do you have any ideas?” I didn't know what he was talking about.

Gradually it became clear to me that that was exactly what he wanted to know: what's on your mind? what are you thinking about whatever issue is current? what about the

Soviets? what about Vienna? do you have any ideas? It became almost an emblem of Fulbright's approach to dealing with the staff.

He was so much fun to deal with because he was so receptive. He was very accessible. If you had an idea, he always wanted to know what it was.

Q: So you're sitting there as a young man, how would you come up with ideas? With other input, were you talking with other people, reading, how did these ideas?

TILLMAN: It was a kind of firmament going there. We had a staff director, Carl Marcy, who had something of that same attitude. He was highly receptive to ideas. He was the most unbureaucratic person I've ever known, in anything resembling a bureaucracy.

He encouraged us, on the staff, to establish what he called “lawyer-client” relationships with the senators. Far from insisting on holding the reins of power himself, his attitude was that his job was made easier to the degree that each of us was servicing one member or more than one member of the committee.

We were non-partisan so there was no Republican staff, no Democratic staff. When you were hired it was by a bipartisan subcommittee. It tended to be deferential to the Chairman's wishes but they had what amounted to a veto. If there were objections, you couldn't be hired.

Q: We're talking about the early 60s, this Senate Foreign Relations staff at that time, where were they coming from? Who were these people?

TILLMAN: Carl Marcy, as I say, was Staff Director, he was a generalist. The senior consultant then, and for many years afterwards, was Pat Holt, who was a Latin America specialist and has since become a scholar both of Latin American affairs and of Congress. There was George Denny, whom I never got to know very well because he left to join the State Department. John Newhouse who left soon after I came on the staff. He's now an

occasional writer for The New Yorker. Don Henderson came out of CIA and dealt with African issues. Although all of us tended to be generalists. Those were the principal ones in those early years dealing with substantive areas.

Q: Again, you were coming, obviously with no tremendous background in foreign affairs, at this point.

TILLMAN: I had experience dealing with international relations.

Q: Alright, I'll take that. But I'm saying, you had come straight out of the academic world.

TILLMAN: I had no practical experience.

Q: Had no practical experience in this. Were those that had practical experience, not necessarily Foreign Service, I'm thinking from anywhere, you could bounce ideas off before you bounced ideas off the senator and all this.

TILLMAN: We were in pretty constant communication with each other, all of us on the staff. But I was mostly in consultation with Senator Fulbright. We seemed to connect very early on. He had me write a lot of speeches. The way that would work, he'd call me into his office and we would just sort of get a dialogue going. He was really full of ideas.

Very often when he would ask you if you had an idea, what that really meant was that he had one that he wanted to try out. We would sit in his office, I didn't use a tape recorder, I'd just take my yellow pad and make notes. We would just cover the range of issues, of matters, of problems, whatever seemed current.

In many cases, there was some discrete reason for it. He was committed to make a speech on the floor, his annual foreign policy review. Or he was giving a lecture at some university which he did with a great deal of regularity. He either had an idea of what to talk about, or he would ask me, or other members of the staff, what seemed appropriate.

We would explore the idea together, sometimes for hours, literally, for hours. I never understood how he found the time to do it, but he did. Then I'd go off and do what he asked and give it to him. I always gave it directly to him. I'd make sure a copy went to Carl Marcy.

Then the senator would call me back, we'd go over it again—check this and check that; what do you think about this; I don't agree to that. Then I'd go work on it further. One of the things that was always personally agreeable to me was that he'd never change anything without involving me in the process and ultimately would send me off to make the change. So you always had that nice sense of proprietary involvement in your own work, even though you were working as a staff assistant to a senator.

Fulbright traveled with some regularity. He was not nearly as prone to travel as some of his colleagues. But there were quite a number of trips to Europe, later on to the Middle East, to the South Pacific.

Q: How was he meshing with the Kennedy administration. There were stories that he might have been made the Secretary of State, but he didn't. I'm not quite sure why.

TILLMAN: I know the answer to that. He was under close and careful consideration for Secretary of State—this was before my time, that was in the fall of 1960. I came to him in May of '61 as an intern, but I discussed this with him many times. My other source of information was doing the interviews with him for the biography that I am currently writing.

He was under close and careful consideration. I think Kennedy probably wanted him as Secretary of State. Lyndon Johnson, who was the newly elected Vice President, was a very strong promoter of Fulbright for Secretary of State. Fulbright, in fact, had supported Johnson, rather than Kennedy, for the Democratic nomination in 1960.

Q: They were both senators.

TILLMAN: They were both senators, they later fell out as you know, but they were still on cordial terms at the time. Lyndon Johnson used to call Fulbright in the Senate: “Bill, you're my Secretary of State.”

In any event, it was not offered to him. The reasons were opposition. In the first instance from the black community and the civil rights community because of Fulbright's civil rights record. He having opposed all civil rights legislation; as a Southern senator he had participated in the Senate filibusters; signed the Southern Manifesto in 1956. That went a long way to vetoing him. The Jewish community was opposed to him too because he was considered to be receptive to, or sympathetic to, the Arab viewpoints. He had been to Egypt as well as to Israel in '59 or '60, I'm not sure. He met with Nasser in Egypt and they got along fairly well.

Bobby Kennedy, I think, was opposed to him as Secretary of State. It was not offered to him. He didn't really mind. He was very ambivalent about it. I discussed this with him many times.

He was very apprehensive that if he became Secretary of State he'd get into trouble. He would disagree with the administration on something and he'd be—out of the Senate, out of a job. His wife didn't want him to be Secretary of State. She said he was not suited to it temperamentally. He respected her opinions.

Q: So you didn't have the feeling that he was sitting back, being dogged in the manger later on by not being Secretary of State.

TILLMAN: No, no, he got along very well with Kennedy. Even though he had not supported Kennedy for the Democratic nomination, he acquired great respect for him. He was very impressed with Kennedy's intellect. They got along quite well. He was virtually the only senator involved in the deliberations on the Bay of Pigs operation. That was quite accidental.

That came about in the first instance because our Latin American specialist had essentially put the pieces together as to what was in prospect. He composed a memorandum advising against the operation which he gave to Fulbright, and with which Fulbright agreed.

It just happened that during the Easter recess (it was spring of '61) Senator and Mrs. Fulbright were going to Palm Beach. The President was going to Palm Beach. He gave Fulbright a ride on Air Force One. Everybody on the flight was talking about the Bay of Pigs operation of which Fulbright had no prior official knowledge. He took the occasion, almost literally, to whip this memo out of his pocket, gave it to the President.

The President, thereafter, included him in the deliberations. There was a meeting at the State Department, he argued against it. They went ahead with it. Kennedy was extremely gracious to him about it. He used to say to him afterwards, “You're the only one who can say, I told you so.” He got along very well with Kennedy. And he was very favorably impressed with Kennedy's approach to dealing with the Soviets starting with the American University speech. And culminating, in a short administration, with the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, for which Fulbright served as Floor Leader. He was very enthusiastic, very energetic in support of that treaty.

Q: You as a staff. I mean, here you have a real change in the administration. You have sort of the Kennedy administration, a bunch of young bright people, charging around. Did you get engaged with any of them, where they're talking either at Georgetown cafes or in the State Department cafeteria, Congressional cafeteria with the Kennedy crew that was in there.

TILLMAN: I didn't very much. I think some of my colleagues did, I think some of the people I worked with did. But that was just a matter of style and temperament. I guess I was somewhat more academic, less activist and less inclined by temperament to seek people out. I was usually occupied with my yellow pad; I tended to seek out information more from

the Library of Congress, I guess that was just the academic way of doing it. I met a certain number of people but I wasn't very active.

Q: I was just wondering whether being a bipartisan committee, whether the Kennedy entourage almost kind of took it over. One hears of staffs, all being kind of young together, fellow beings, whether that was happening or not.

TILLMAN: No. We retained our independence. The Chairman wanted the committee staff to be nonpartisan and independent. Carl Marcy wanted the staff to be nonpartisan and independent.

He would not allow us to take speeches or any draft that was drafted in the State Department or any agencies. We were free to consult, to seek information, but we had to produce our own work. Carl was very firm about that. The committee staff had to be independent.

Q: Who were some of the other senators who were particularly engaged. I mean, you had obviously a committee but which ones of the senators were particularly engaged to find out...

I'm really talking about the early Kennedy period.

TILLMAN: Hubert Humphrey was active on the committee before and after his term as Vice President. Albert Gore Sr. was an active member of the committee. Wayne Morse of Oregon was particularly active in that committee. He used to drive Fulbright crazy.

Q: In a way, they were sort of like two similar peas, weren't they?

TILLMAN: Not at first. They were really very different in style and temperament. Morse—they used to call him the “5 o'clock shadow”—he'd get on the floor at 5:00 in the afternoon and deliver speeches that would go on for hours and hours. It was recreation for him. Mrs. Morse used to sit in the gallery and enjoy it to the fullest. Some of the others, including

Fulbright, were desperate to go home and have a drink and dinner, but Morse would tie them up for hours on end.

Before Fulbright himself reconsidered his attitude toward the foreign aid program, he was the principal supporter of the foreign aid program. It was his job to get it through the Senate. Morse opposed foreign aid in 1962 or '63 and he gave Fulbright a lot of trouble. For one thing because he was so extraordinarily intelligent and absolutely inexhaustible. He could keep the Senate in session endlessly.

Later on, of course in the Vietnam War, they became allies and collaborators in opposition to the war. Fulbright himself became an opponent, not of foreign aid but of bilateral foreign aid. He favored conducting the foreign aid program through the international lending agencies.

Q: What about some of the Kennedy initiatives, what about the Peace Corps? How did this set?

TILLMAN: That went through very easily, there was genuine enthusiasm for it. I think Hubert Humphrey was the prime mover for that. Fulbright was well disposed to the Peace Corps but not particularly interested in it. He never thought it had the same significance as the Fulbright Scholarships.

Q: Then there was the Alliance for Progress.

TILLMAN: The Alliance for Progress, that was largely Wayne Morse's area. He was the Chairman of the Latin America subcommittee. He shepherded that a lot. Fulbright was very enthusiastic about it. He pretty much kept the committee under central direction. The subcommittees had very little autonomy. Virtually anything of consequence was done through the full committee. The subcommittees had no separate staffs, they drew on the full committees staff, and they were considered consultative rather than legislative.

Q: Kennedy, in his early years in the 60s, sort of resided as far as the appearance of Africa on the world scene, countries becoming independent more. You had Soapy Williams as head of the African bureau, there was a lot of enthusiasm about this new force that was coming. Here you had Fulbright, who certainly came from a southern background, and other senators on the committee—how did they look at Africa? From the staff, what was the view of the emergence of Africa on the scene?

TILLMAN: That's a little hard for me to answer because I was little involved in it. I don't think Fulbright himself was much involved with Africa. I can't even remember who the Chairman of the Africa subcommittee was at the time. The staff person was Don Henderson, who is now dead. But Africa did not command a lot of attention.

Q: That's the answer really, there was enthusiasm but it had not transmitted itself.

Can you say how you, and maybe your colleagues, viewed the Soviet threat through the early 60s. Or was it a threat?

TILLMAN: Well yes, it could be seen as a threat, but the thrust of opinion (I hesitate to say within the whole committee—I'm not sure of the other senators), the general direction of opinion, was in favor of d#tente.

Fulbright himself—again this was before my time but I heard the account many times—gave a hearing to Khrushchev. Khrushchev was here in 1959 and the Speaker of the House, McCormack of Massachusetts, would not allow Khrushchev to address a joint session of the Congress. That was during the Eisenhower administration. The administration asked Fulbright if he could give a forum to Khrushchev and he invited him to the Foreign Relations Committee. He was rather impressed with Khrushchev. He was much inclined towards accommodation with the Soviets.

Q: This would be in '62.

TILLMAN: October '62. Fulbright got in a kind of awkward position—Congress was adjourned at the time. He was in Arkansas campaigning for reelection. The President called the leadership back to Washington, for what they thought was a consultation, when in fact it was a briefing over the Cuban missile crisis. They met at 5:00 in the evening, whatever that date was in October. At 7:00 in the evening, Kennedy went on television to announce the quarantine as our strategy on the Cuban missile crisis.

As it happened, we were pretty much on skeleton staff because the Senate was adjourned, Carl was gone, practically everybody was gone. I was one of the few around. I was the most junior.

Fulbright called and ended up with me. He said, “See if you can find out what's going on and put together some kind of a memorandum. I've really got to shift gears.” He'd been dealing with cotton, soybeans, chickens and rice. So I tried to call the White House, but they wouldn't take any calls. There was so much information around. So it was speculative but not uninformed.

I put together a memorandum suggesting, in the interest of avoiding confrontation, not promoting confrontation, that maybe it would be wiser or safer to land some troops in Cuba, allow the Russians to stand aside, so that you would not have a direct confrontation and could dismantle the missiles. Well, it wasn't a very good idea for a whole lot of reasons that were subsequently made clear. But it was just a discussion point.

Fulbright and Richard Russell of Georgia, the Chairman of Armed Services, both made approximately that kind of a point. I don't think it was so much of a proposal as it was something like a talking point at the White House. Somehow that got translated into a firm proposal and many people were puzzled that Fulbright, of all people, wanted to land forces in Cuba. it seemed out of character.

It wasn't that kind of a proposal and neither he nor I, when we talked about it, thought it was a great idea. We didn't know about the secret communications between Kennedy and Khrushchev. Nor, which is even more to the point, was he aware that this wasn't a real confrontation. They'd already decided what to do. Kennedy was calling the leadership in as a courtesy, so that they would get the information 2 hours before he went on national television.

Q: What was the impression of how the missile crisis came out?

TILLMAN: It was satisfactory. I think that the members of the committee and the staff, and I can certainly speak for myself, were quite impressed with the competence of the crisis management skill and coordination.

Q: It really seemed to bring things together in the Kennedy administration. Which before had been, as all new administrations, charging off in different directions.

TILLMAN: They had the embarrassment of the Bay of Pigs followed by the Vienna meeting.

Q: Khrushchev obviously was not impressed by Kennedy, he ended up with the Cuban crisis and all this. Did you have the feeling—I mean, you had the Bay of Pigs, the rise of Castro, and Khrushchev talking about surpassing the United States, you had the Berlin crisis, and then you had the missile crisis—did you have any feeling at that time that we really ought to be getting ready for war? It looks like we're on a collision course? Or was the feeling of you and your colleagues that this was going to be worked out?

TILLMAN: I think the feeling was more generally that it would be worked out than otherwise. Fulbright was periodically disturbed by instances that he was viewed as unduly provocative on either side. But, on the whole, the relationship, though adversarial, probably wasn't damaged.

Q: How about your relations, we're still talking about the early 60s with the State Department, both the State Department and the Foreign Service. This is a new area for you, what were you getting both in the staff and from people you talked to, how and what did you feel about it?

TILLMAN: I personally?

Q: Yes, you personally and then move on from there to the staff.

TILLMAN: I began to get to know a fair number of counterparts in the State Department. I was enjoying working with them. In fact I was going over to the Foreign Service Institute to take language classes. I took early morning French for about 2 years. Later on I began to take Spanish. In fact, I got to know a fair number of Foreign Service officers just by taking language classes.

Q: I was wondering whether you were told, when you came on board, to watch out for these guys, they're going to try to pull the wool over you.

One of the things I get, out of a lot of the interviews I have, is why can't the Foreign Service be better at dealing with Congress than it is. The idea that it's usually Foreign Service people saying this, but talking about their colleagues, saying, it's sort of criminal the way they, the Foreign Service, don't work better with Congress.

TILLMAN: I didn't have any real experience of that kind, certainly not in the early years. Later on we had the falling out over Vietnam, but we never had a feeling of animosity to the State Department. Carl Marcy dealt with the State Department on a regular basis. In fact, Dean Rusk used to ask Carl to come over to his office to chat. He used to call Carl Marcy on the phone to chat over his frustrations with Fulbright. We were at liberty to have whatever contact we felt we needed, in fact, we were encouraged.

I can't remember more specifically how I was dealing with it because I was so much of a generalist in those early years. So I didn't really develop a constituency in the State Department. I would deal with one person or another. I never was afraid to call. I'd go over, we'd have lunch.

Later on I got involved in the Middle East; I acquired the responsibility for the Middle East subcommittee. My personal position was much closer to the State Department than it was to the dominant group in Congress.

Q: Before we move to the Middle East, let's talk about Vietnam. When you got on board, Vietnam was sort of a cloud on the horizon. But it wasn't until '61, '62 that Vietnam was much of a problem.

TILLMAN: No, it was on the horizon. It was in the wings, increasingly a matter of concern. We never were closely engaged with it in the early sixties.

I tend to speak for Fulbright more than for Congress because I knew him so much better. I was much more engaged with the Chairman than with others. I think that was true for the staff in general.

I don't mean to digress but I need to make this point parenthetically. There used to be a certain amount of grousing that Fulbright monopolized the staff. My description of that is that he magnetized the staff. He was so much more interested in what we were doing and what we had to contribute. We had such ready access to him, much greater and easier access than we had with other members of the committee. There were exceptions.

He just had this appetite for information and ideas. And you knew, any member of the staff knew, that if you did a memo, the Chairman was going to read it. He was always interested. So that's why I suspect you might find, if you ever talk to any of my

other colleagues, we would tend to be talking more about Fulbright and less about the committee and the institution because he was such a great chairman.

But anyway, coming back to your question about Vietnam, it was in the wings. I remember hearing Fulbright make passing references to it: This is beginning to look bad, this is looking more disturbing now, I hope it won't distract us. Then of course it did distract us.

Q: Lyndon Johnson became President at the end of '63. It was '64, I think, when there was the shelling at Pleiku and we went into Danang and all, and then the Gulf of Tonkin. From your perspective, was anybody on the staff told you better be my Vietnam type, or were you all kind of called.

TILLMAN: We all got involved increasingly in a kind of vortex. Both the members of the committee and the staff increasingly became involved. It was the consuming issue in 60s. It is so strongly implanted in my mind that I'm constantly mystified today that my students don't have the same view of Vietnam as being the climatic event in the post-War era.

It was only at the beginning of '64 that the issue began to attract the committee's attention, the Chairman's attention, our attention, I can't speak for all my colleagues, some might have been much more attentive than I was. Fulbright had great confidence in the Johnson administration and that affected his attitude at the outset.

Fulbright was one of the people that Johnson called from Dallas the day that Kennedy was assassinated. He asked him if he would be at the White House when he got back. I don't really know what transpired at that meeting but Johnson felt that Fulbright was one of the people he wanted to consult about this terrific crisis of transition following the assassination.

Fulbright was very sympathetic to Johnson's domestic program, except for the civil rights which he was not free to support. In the course of 1964, again without our aiming a great deal of attention to Vietnam, we were thinking about Europe, we were thinking about

Soviet-American relations. Vietnam was a kind of nagging, irritating, disturbing sideshow, it wasn't center stage.

Then the watershed of that was the Gulf of Tonkin. Johnson sent Rusk and McNamara, respectively of State and Defense, up to report to the committee about these alleged attacks that were said to have taken place in the Gulf of Tonkin. He said he needed a resolution that would kind of be a declaration of resolute unity supporting an act of the President.

Fulbright was quite receptive to the idea. That whole process of holding hearings and floor action and enactment took place in about two days. The resolution was adopted unanimously in the House of Representatives. All but two of the senators voted for it. The two dissenters were Wayne Morse, who was a perennial maverick, and Ernest Gruening of Alaska.

But Fulbright, to his lasting regret, supported it unequivocally. He rejected proposed amendments that were offered by Gaylord Nelson, the Democratic senator from Wisconsin, that purported to state that this is not to be understood as authorization for full-scale war—something like that.

Fulbright's response to that on the Senate floor was that the substance of the Nelson amendment was entirely consistent with the Johnson administration's intentions. But Fulbright didn't want to write it into the resolution because that would necessitate calling a conference with the House of Representatives to reconcile differences, and would dissipate the political impact of this resounding, virtually unanimous stand in support of the President.

All the more, Fulbright acted very candidly for partisan reasons. Johnson was running for reelection against Barry Goldwater, who was talking about things like defoliating the

jungle. Fulbright wanted to help Johnson in any way he could to bolster his credentials, that he was not “soft on communism,” we weren't going to sell out of Vietnam, and so forth.

I don't know if any of my colleagues on the committee staff had serious reservations about that. I regret that I did not. I concurred fully. Fulbright assigned me to write his floor speech for the Tonkin Resolution. I did so expressing full enthusiasm for the resolution. Neither I nor others involved are too proud about it in retrospect, because we knew later this was a hell of a bad enactment, and we should have known it at the time.

Q: What was the mistake you think in retrospect?

TILLMAN: The mistake was that we should have had hearings, we should have explored the issue in some detail, we should have tried to ascertain exactly what happened—we later did ascertain what happened—in the Gulf of Tonkin. Which essentially consisted of the discovery that the attack had been provoked, and that there was some considerable doubt that the second attack ever took place.

All we had to go with was this testimony by McNamara and Rusk to the effect that these were two distinct unprovoked attacks. We should have examined that more closely. It was a mistake Fulbright has not repeated. He subsequently required evidence and information and specific testimony. The episode greatly undercut trust in the whole Executive Branch of the government.

What we also should have done, even in the absence of specific intelligence about what took place in the Gulf of Tonkin—this could and should have been done—was to write into the legislation exactly what we were authorizing and what we were not authorizing. We should have accepted the Nelson amendment. We should have treated the resolution as an instrument of law and not as a declaration of politics or policy.

We ended up in this very anomalous and embarrassing position of having adopted legislation that said something that was directly contradictory to the intention of Congress.

The executive branch was able to read that, fairly and honestly, as a carte blanche for full-scale military operations.

That was not the intention of the Congress, it is not what appears in the legislative history. One senator after another, including Russell of Georgia, who had commanding prestige and influence in the Senate especially among the conservatives, stood up and said, “This is not a mandate for war, this is, in effect, a declaration of support for the President in this instance.” The language of the resolution didn't say that. The resolution language was carte blanche.

Q: Where did the language come from?

TILLMAN: That was written by the State Department and the White House. We took it over.

Q: As time went on, did you get involved in hearings and preparation for hearings?

TILLMAN: Oh sure, it became one of my major activities.

Q: What would you do? Just to give an idea to somebody. You've got a hearing, let's say on Vietnam, what would you be after and how would you prepare yourself to get your senators ready.

TILLMAN: We weren't getting much cooperation from the Executive branch once we were in opposition on Vietnam. When I say in opposition I'm not speaking for the committee as a whole because, as you well know, there were members of the committee that supported the administration's policy. Oddly enough, the bulk of the opposition to the Democratic President came from the Democratic members of the committee. Some Republicans, Javits of New York, and George Aiken of Vermont, were generally on the critical side of the issue.

We had no particular plan of action for preparing for these hearings. Just the informal contacts we had with the people in the Executive branch and elsewhere, special reading, the Library of Congress. All kinds of people kept presenting themselves, people who had been scholars, writers, who had been to Vietnam. They were constantly presenting themselves.

We didn't have to ascertain to a certainty that they were telling the truth. It would provide the basis for questions, for initiating inquiry. On the basis of this, this heterogeneous source of information, we would put together a whole lot of questions. But they didn't come from any particular source.

Q: Were there attempts of your committee, and obviously with the instigation of the senators, to cut below the official spokesman—I'm thinking of Secretary of State assistants—to get down to the both of them, not only the Foreign Service side but the military side, to find out what really was happening. Was there an attempt to get down?

You might say lower down, to get away from people who were obviously, one, talking from second-hand information. And, two, who were much more under the President's thumb than somebody who was kind of out there and had to tell the truth.

TILLMAN: Absolutely. A select subcommittee was put together under Stuart Symington—called a subcommittee on US commitments abroad.

Q: The senator from Missouri.

TILLMAN: The senator from Missouri. He had assigned to him two senior staff members, Dick Moose, who's now back in the State Department, and Jim Lowenstein. Dick and Jim took, I don't know how many trips to Vietnam. They did a series of reports on the war, on the conduct of the war, that provided a great deal of the basis for proceedings of the subcommittee of the full committee areas. I went to Vietnam once, but I wasn't involved.

Q: What was the impression of the move-slow and stay-on-it?

Jim and I had taken Serbian together, along with Larry Eagleburger in the Foreign Service Institute, then we all went out together to serve in Belgrade. I talked to him when I was Consul General in Saigon from '69 to '70.

How were they getting their information and how was it being used?

TILLMAN: I don't think I'll attempt to answer to that.

Q: How did you use the information that was coming back. Did you feel that this was good stuff from the field, better than what you were getting from the canned presentation? This is true in any field but particularly foreign affairs, also military affairs, it would seem that it's a little hard to cut through, to find out what really is happening.

Because you have this layer above, of the people who aren't doing it. I'm talking about Secretaries of Defense and Assistant Secretaries of Defense, Secretaries of State, Assistant Secretaries of State, and all. And then you've got the people out in the field, they're there. And then you have the people who can sort of turn it into, make it look good for the policy point of view. I suppose there's a real effort to cut in there to get a more whole picture.

TILLMAN: It was just not my area of activity. There was a general belief that Moose and Lowenstein were doing an extraordinarily top-flight job. Then we got Bill Bader, who conducted further inquiry into the Gulf of Tonkin—I believe that was in 1968. Bill had had naval experience and he was able to read the naval logs.

Q: Gibberish to the rest of us.

TILLMAN: He put it together in a brief, objective and professional way. A kind of revised picture of what had happened in the Gulf of Tonkin.

Q: I take it within time, as the Vietnam situation went on, that the staff for the most part was beginning to be opposed to Vietnam. What was the feeling? What was the problem?

TILLMAN: Again I hesitate to speak for other people.

Q: Speak for yourself then.

TILLMAN: The feeling was that the war was a mistake. It was not of vital interest to the United States. It was draining off resources of several dimensions, including lives, resources and political capital. It effectively undermined Johnson's “Great Society” domestic program, which we regretted very much. It distracted attention and resources from improving relations with the Soviets. It consumed the attention of the political community.

Fulbright's attitude, with which I concurred, was that it would not be tremendously damaging to the national interest of the United States if Vietnam were united under Communist rule. Fulbright gave Johnson a memo that I prepared in April of '65 that said it exactly.

Q: What was the impression of what happened to Johnson? Was it Johnson doing it or was he captured by people around him or what was driving him on in Vietnam? He had been a member of the Senate so people knew him well. What were they thinking, why was he moving this way?

TILLMAN: They hadn't expected it of him. I had no personal knowledge myself of that. When I came aboard he had already been Vice President.

I think Fulbright's attitude was that Johnson was a consummate master of political strategy but had little depth of background in foreign policy and was “captured” by the advisers he inherited from Kennedy. Maybe he had—again this is purely speculative—some sense of

inadequacy because he didn't have the kind of Ivy League education these guys had and so forth.

He lost touch with his former associates in the Senate, which tends to happen to Presidents. Many of them would have helped him keep his feet on the ground politically, even though they weren't foreign policy experts, because they had a sense, an informed intuition, a kind of radar about the domestic repercussions, that foreign policy experts and intellectuals couldn't have been expected to provide. But Johnson was out of touch with them.

There was a kind of emotionally intensive process of decision making between Fulbright and those of us who were closest to him about how to try to influence Johnson. The decision was made, just as chance would have it, not on Vietnam but over the intervention in the Dominican Republic in the spring of 1965.

We held hearings that were all executive, which is a closed session, we held hearings over that. We came up with a set of conclusions, the thrust of which were that the administration had misrepresented the reasons for the military intervention.

Pat Holt, the Latin American specialist, put together a summary report. We didn't quite know what was going to happen to this document. The committee was not disposed toward making public a statement critical of the Johnson administration. Fulbright felt that, as Chairman, he had some responsibilities to substantiate or explain that it had been an ill-conceived undertaking.

It was on hold through the summer. Not too long because hearings went well into the summer. They included Thomas Mann, who was Assistant Secretary of State for Latin American, and Tapley Bennett, Ambassador to Santo Domingo. As I remember, Pat Holt went on vacation in August and I picked up this document and kind of expanded on it, rewrote it, put it in Fulbright style. We still didn't know what to do with it.

Fulbright called in the staff. By that time it was clear the committee was not disposed to act. He said, in effect, “Is this another memorandum that I give to the President? He hasn't paid any attention to my previous memos. The memo on Vietnam was just politely brushed off. Or do I go public with this? Which is more likely to have some impact? I want to have an impact on policy.”We were divided among ourselves. Carl Marcy was opposed to going public. I remember him saying at that meeting, “Senator, you're going to have a lot of trouble in Arkansas.” Fulbright got sort of impatient and said, “Carl, I didn't ask you that. I want your foreign policy expertise, I want your views on the substance of this document. Let me worry about the politics.”

Lee Williams, who was Fulbright's administrative assistant, strongly opposed going public in criticism of Lyndon Johnson. Lee ended up saying in effect, quite accurately, “I understand this man, I understand his mode of operation, he will never forgive you, it will undercut your ability to influence him on other more important issues, notably Vietnam. Don't do it.”

Pat and I said, “Do it. It's your duty and responsibility to speak the truth as you understand it.” Fulbright made the speech on September 15, 1965. It was severely critical of the Johnson administration.

Anyway, to get to the relevant core of the matter: Johnson was so enraged by Fulbright's public criticism that Fulbright then had no choice. The episode effectively destroyed his relationship, literally destroyed his personal relationship, with Lyndon Johnson. And when it came to dealing with them on Vietnam, which overwhelmingly superseded the Dominican Republic, Fulbright had no real option except to use the Committee as a public forum.

There was no question of how to perceive it. You were against the war and you used your committee as a public forum. There was no longer any private and personal access to the President. And there never was again except for mostly perfunctory occasions.

Q: What happened when the Nixon administration came on? I still want to concentrate on Vietnam, we'll go to the Middle East in another session. Let's sort of finish on Vietnam.

He was a Republican and all relations had soured so much. What did you feel, and maybe your colleagues feel, about the arrival of Nixon on the scene?

TILLMAN: In the first instance, we were cautiously hopeful. Nixon had said during the campaign that he had planned to end the Vietnam War. Fulbright early on had sent another one of his memoranda to Nixon, in effect, encouraging him to do exactly that—suggesting, directly or indirectly, this isn't your baggage, why not unload it.

He was patient with Nixon for a time, until it became clear that the administration was going to go through a very protracted process of disengagement in Vietnam. The committee under Fulbright then resumed its active opposition through public hearings.

Fulbright established a very cordial relationship, a kind of mutual respectful relationship with Henry Kissinger. They talked, he saw him a lot. He was very impressed with Kissinger's intellect. The personal relationship with Nixon was never as agitated as the relationship with Johnson. Because there was no close friendship to be broken. They had no place to go but up.

Q: The Nixon-Kissinger process was very long, it took about 5 years.

TILLMAN: Till '73, the Paris Accords.

Q: What was the role of the Senate? Were you sort of impatient and pushing?

TILLMAN: Oh yes, impatient and pushing. During that period there were these series of limited legislative enactments such as the Cooper-Church amendment. They in effect put restrictions on military activity in Laos and Cambodia. You also had McGovern-Hatfield,

which never did get a majority, but carried a pretty sizeable minority vote in the Senate. That would have gone much further towards ending the war.

Q: Basically the idea was that the government of South Vietnam was not viable, let's write it off and get out of there. Get on to other business.

Were you working on things concerned with getting involved with China at the time? Were you worried about the Chinese role in Vietnam?

TILLMAN: We were very interested in it. Following the initial set of hearings that came in '66 on Vietnam, which were the first extended set of public hearings on Vietnam, we had hearings on China. Fulbright called in experts and scholars, including John King Fairbank of Harvard, Alan Whiting, many others. Those hearings were published.

We tried to get as much as we could in these Senate hearings on the historical evolution of American relations with China. Fulbright started reading about China, pulling books out of the Library of Congress on China and the history of American relations. I remember one book he read about the Opium War. He got very intrigued with China.

During one trip we took to the South Pacific, one of the members of the delegation was Hiram Fong of Hawaii, of Chinese origin. Fulbright was pumping Senator Fong endlessly —on China, his background, what was it like. Fulbright acquired a great deal of a kind of cultural empathy, or sympathy, with China.

Q: Was Mike Mansfield a factor at this time?

TILLMAN: Yes, oh yes. He was a senior member of the committee, he was the Majority Leader.

Q: Also was an expert on China.

TILLMAN: Yes, Mansfield was more laconic. First of all, he was running the Senate, he did not have a great deal of time to attend committee meetings. To the extent that he did participate, he was very supportive about these inquiries into China. I can't remember what his role was.

Q: What was the feeling when Vietnam fell. Was it one of almost relief or not?

TILLMAN: That would have been '75. No, it wasn't relief. We were grateful to have the Americans out in the beginning of '73. It wasn't quite over because we were still in Cambodia at the time. Finally, legislation was enacted in '75 that terminated the bombing of Cambodia.

Q: How did you view the Paris Peace Accords in '73. Was this sort of a solution, did you see that this would inevitably result in the North Vietnamese taking over?

TILLMAN: It's hard for me to recall exactly what was said or what I thought at that time. It's a kind of retrospective judgement of what you think you thought. What I think I thought at the time was that this is tragic but American withdrawal is welcome and probably Saigon will be gone eventually.

Q: Today is April 4, 1994 and this is an interview with Seth Tillman. Seth, we pretty well covered everything but deliberately I avoided getting into your specialty which was the Middle East during your time on the Hill. How did this specialty come about. How did you end up as being a Middle Eastern type or whatever you want to call it.

TILLMAN: My specialty came about the way most specialties come about on the Hill. Just by somebody needing to do a job at a particular time. We were foreign policy generalists. I should point out that I had had no academic background on the Middle East, even though I now teach a course on the Middle East. I've written a book on the Middle East. I myself never had a course on the Middle East.

It came about in the first instance because somebody needed to plug a hole on the Foreign Relations Committee. I don't mean to make it sound quite that capricious. I had a general interest in it. And in the years following the 1967 war, the committee was increasingly interested in it and the Chairman was increasingly interested in it.

I wrote a speech for Senator Fulbright that he delivered in August, I think it was August 25th, 1970. It laid out what we thought, and in retrospect, I still think, was a pretty reasonable basis for settlement based on Israeli withdrawal from the occupied territories, with minor variations in their favor—approximately along the lines of the Security Council Resolution 242 and the Rogers Plan of 1969.

But with the additional proposal, which we thought had some credibility coming from the Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, that the United States give Israel a bilateral security treaty following a general settlement to ensure Israel's security. As a supplement to whatever multilateral guarantees might be put in place. That was not warmly received at the time.

As I recall, Rabin was Ambassador here at the time. My recollection which may be inaccurate, but I think I remember correctly, is that he referred to it as a vicious proposal.

Q: This is from the Israelis side?

TILLMAN: Yes. That it was some kind of a device to entrap Israel into giving up the occupied territories, which was far from being the case. But anyway, it didn't ring any gongs.

We continued to explore the issue. At some point along there, I can't put the date on it, Stuart Symington who had been the Chair of the subcommittee on the Middle East...

Q: Stuart Symington from Missouri. With senators it's rather important where they're from. Fulbright is from Arkansas. These are not senators of strong Jewish sentiments. This often makes a difference.

TILLMAN: Symington gave up that chairmanship—I don't remember why. He had had Dick Moose working for him on the committee staff. I don't recall that they were an especially active subcommittee. But after that, the question was who was going to fill that slot. Senator Fulbright decided—if I remember correctly I think I suggested to him that he make himself chairman of the Middle East subcommittee. Which was a difference of academic importance as far as he was concerned. Whether he was chairing a subcommittee or a full committee made no difference to him whatsoever.

Q: But it did keep somebody else from chairing it, in a way.

TILLMAN: That's right. That's the point.

I also took a trip out to the area around that time. That was in the fall of 1970. I'd never been to the Middle East. I went by myself, I spent several weeks. I went to Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan, and Israel. That was at the time that the civil war in Jordan was coming to a conclusion. There was still some fighting going on.

Q: Is this Black September time?

TILLMAN: Yes. It was the November following the Black September.

Q: It was the expulsion of the Palestinians, the PLO, from Jordan.

TILLMAN: By the Jordanian army, that's correct.

I spent some days in Jordan. I became acquainted with and established what came to be a very long lasting relationship with Dean Brown, who was then Ambassador in Jordan, and with Hume Horan who was his chief Political Officer. Hume later became Ambassador to

Saudi Arabia, a very gifted Arabist. I kept up with these people through the years, right up to the present time. They contributed a lot to my understanding of the area.

Then I went to Israel and it was the first of what was to be quite a number of trips to the region,—both escorting senators and going on my own in a staff capacity.

Then with that subcommittee, we held hearings at various times. And when Fulbright left the Senate at the end of 1974, George McGovern took the chair of the subcommittee. We worked together very harmoniously. We had a series of hearings in 1975 and again in 1976.

In 1972 I went with Fulbright to Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Kuwait. I particularly remember—I don't know if this is a vignette of any particular relevance—we went through the Hofuf Oasis in Saudi Arabia, where Senator Fulbright was very impressed with the productivity of the desert agriculture, the massive irrigation that was required—although there was some question about how cost effective it is.

Q: This is in the eastern province, Al-Hasah.

TILLMAN: Right.

Then we had an audience with King Faisal. It was really a kind of a dialogue of the deaf. King Faisal kept bringing the conversation back to the “Protocol of the Elders of Zion.”

Q: Which was a violent anti-Semitic thing which originated in Russia during the Czarists. It has absolutely no validity but it keeps coming up. Doesn't seem to die.

TILLMAN: Fulbright kept trying to get him off the subject. I remember him saying something to the effect of: “I think your Majesty is too pessimistic.” He kept trying to talk about the Hofuf Oasis and the desert agriculture. The King wanted to talk about the

“Protocol of the Elders of Zion.” Hume Horan was the interpreter. He was by then stationed in Saudi Arabia.

Then we went to the Emirates. The Emir gave us quite a splendid dinner in honor of Senator Fulbright. They talked about various things, including hunting bustards out in the desert, a desert bird called the bustard. The Emir actually produced a frozen bustard with all its feathers on. He put it down right in front of us so that we could see what it looked like.

I went out again in '73, shortly after the '73 war, with a staff colleague, Bill Ashworth. We went to Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Israel, and Jordan.

What I do remember particularly about that trip was that I had a rather long meeting with Salah Khalaf, whose nom-de-guerre is Abu Iyad, the reputed head of Black September and number 2 to Arafat. That came about, not at my initiative, but at the initiative of the American Embassy in Beirut. They were prohibited from dealing with the PLO people at that time. They were very curious about him and they knew I was under no restriction, working for the Senate, as they were about talking to the PLO.

So, through some journalistic intermediaries—a French journalist, who subsequently got killed in the civil war—a meeting was arranged with Abu Iyad—whom I'd never heard of, frankly.

Q: Was there much substance to this meeting?

TILLMAN: Basically a laying out of the PLO position. He brought up the subject of terrorism—who's a “terrorist” and who's a “freedom fighter.” He spoke of the purpose of these acts that he declined to call terrorism, making some reference to the killing of Cleo Noel in Khartoum, and making the point that they were not out to commit mayhem but to attract the world's attention.

I wrote this all up in a report. There are reports around, I can very easily find a copy of it if you're interested.

Q: If you do, at some point I'd like you to send it to me. We can put it into the record.

I'd like to really go back right to the beginning. You came onto the Senate staff in 1961. What was your impression of the staff, the general feeling towards the Middle East? Israel of course was always the center focus. Let's talk about the whole Middle East at that time. You were a generalist and all that. What were you getting?

TILLMAN: In those earlier years?

Q: In those earlier years, before the 67 War.

TILLMAN: Not much. I wasn't myself focused on the Middle East in that period. I think it was an issue over which most committee members, for reasons of domestic political pressure, skated very lightly indeed. They were all susceptible to the pressure of the Israel lobby. Which was, without question, the most powerful of all of the foreign policy lobbies.

Q: You were mentioning the pressure of the Israeli, was it that powerful even in '61?

TILLMAN: Yes I think it was. Senator Fulbright conducted an investigation of the foreign lobbies in '62. Walter Pincus, who now writes for the Washington Post, directed that. The Israeli lobby figured in that and it resulted in some amendments to the Foreign Lobbying Act. I was not directly involved but I remember they were getting a lot of flak about that at the time. I couldn't specify that although I'm sure that Walter Pincus could.

It was just generally understood that the Israel lobby was the most potent foreign policy lobby because it could reach into a member's constituency for electoral purposes. Most of them stayed clear of it. Fulbright pretty much stayed clear of it. Later on we got absorbed in it, we got interested in it. I think the smart ones stayed away from it. We were dumb.

Q: I was wondering on this, did you find as a staff member, that when Israel came up, particularly the senators from California, the senators from New York, I'm not sure how Florida was at that time, did you kind of roll your eyes and say, my god. In the very early times, were they very pronouncedly buying the Israeli line and everything?

TILLMAN: I can't answer that. I really was not conscious of it or engaged in it until 1970. I had no more than a generalist's, even rather superficial, interest in and knowledge of the subject before 1970.

Q: The '67 War in many ways, although the United States had always been supportive of Israel, up to '67 basically it was getting its military supplies and all that from France. Round to about '70, when you got yourself engaged, where were we then?

TILLMAN: The United States by then had become the principal supplier of arms and foreign assistance. France had cut Israel off after the 1967 War. There were strong supporters of Israel in the Congress, some of whom were more discriminating, I would say, then others.

The ones who were discriminating—by discriminating, I mean prudent about what was really good for Israel rather than going overboard for domestic political purposes—were members like Senator Javits of New York and Senator Ribicoff of Connecticut.

Q: These were both senators from large Jewish communities but also being Jewish themselves.

TILLMAN: Both Jewish themselves.

The one who I thought was quite extravagant and indiscriminate was Henry Jackson of Washington. But I always had the feeling with Ribicoff and Javits, especially Ribicoff, that they never allowed their personal bond, or personal sympathies, to Israel to carry them to

the point of pressing too hard, where it would be to Israel's ultimate disadvantage. They always had a firm sense of what was crucial for the United States.

Fulbright didn't agree with them and I didn't agree with them on many aspects of that. We were willing to apply considerable pressure, which is to say financial pressure, withholding financial support to encourage concessions. But that was a thesis that was never persuasive.

Q: What was the motivation, do you think, of Senator Scoop Jackson from Washington. He's not Jewish, he comes from a place that's not particularly strong in Jewish settlement in the state of Washington. He's dead now.

What was his motivation?

TILLMAN: I can only speculate on that, I have no way of knowing. I did not know him personally. I slightly knew his principal advisor who was Richard Perle, who was very strongly committed in that direction. From all I've ever heard, Perle had a great deal to do with guiding, influencing, shaping Jackson's thoughts on that.

They were responsible, of course, for the Jackson Amendment. Which I think we talked about last time. I can't remember for sure.

Q: Let's talk about it again, just in case. I think we did too but we can expunge it.

The Jackson Amendment was essentially what?

TILLMAN: The Jackson Amendment withheld non-discriminatory trade treatment which, in a word, is technically the most-favored-nation trade treatment, from non-market economies who restricted emigration. Which was actually targeted towards the Soviet Union and Jewish emigration.

Our argument, which I think had been vindicated, I feel sure it has been vindicated, was that you couldn't coerce the Soviets on an issue like that. That the effect would be that they would defy you and that it would undercut the very beneficial agreements that Nixon and Kissinger had concluded. And that is precisely what happened.

That was Kissinger's view. Kissinger was very much against the Jackson Amendment.

I think the emigration was around 35,000 in 1973. And it dropped, precipitously, I can't give you the figure but I can easily find the figure, after the enactment of the Jackson Amendment in December of 1974.

And the Soviets denounced the trade agreement that Nixon had concluded. Which wiped out a number of beneficial possibilities, including a repayment of the World War II Lend-Lease debt.

It generally undercut, you might even say torpedoed, the Nixon d#tente, which we thought was very unfortunate.

Q: On the Senate staff as you were getting into these things, because they did, I mean, Israel was basically the Senator Jackson Amendment. Was there debate on the staff over the validity of these things? How would this be played out on the Senate, because you could have all your experts around. But at the same time it boiled down to the decision of a relatively few people.

TILLMAN: Jackson, of course, was not on the Foreign Relations Committee. He was on Armed Services. I don't recall there being very much debate. There were a number of influential staff people, some of whose members were, some of whom were not, on Foreign Relations.

I think of people like Pete Lakeland, who worked for Senator Javits, although he was not on the committee staff. He was on Javits' personal staff. Perle, who worked with Jackson.

Then there was Maury Anitay, who later became Director of AIPAC, the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, who at one time worked for Ribicoff although I think he later became disillusioned with Ribicoff.

I didn't get into any debates with these people. They didn't have anything to do with me. I've often been asked: how does the Israel lobby work? Well I know next to nothing about it. I was sealed off very early on as somebody they didn't find particularly receptive. I had very little to do with them.

Q: I would think staff on the Foreign Affairs Committee would be, I mean this is where you start pushing your buttons if you're a lobbyist or something like that. How did AIPAC, and other lobbies, did you get involved with any of them?

TILLMAN: Not really very much at all. Occasionally they would approach you. But as I say, the people from the Israeli Embassy and from AIPAC, they mostly left me alone. They dealt with their friends. They identified me, a close associate of Fulbright, as being unreceptive to their conception of their interest. I never really saw them.

Q: Did you find on the staff, over a period of time dealing with the Middle East, they were "true believers" in, you might say, the Israeli cause? Because these could come also not only from Jewish groups but also from fundamentalist Christian groups. You know, the Holy Land and all that. It's a very mixed bag of people who get emotionally involved with Israel and the Holy Land within the American political spectrum.

Did you find that you had "true believers?"

TILLMAN: I think some of those staffers were, some of the ones I mentioned, Amitay, and Perle. Steven Isaacs' book, Jews in American Politics, covers this.

Q: What was the book called?

TILLMAN: Jews in American Politics by Steven Isaacs, I think it was published around 1974. It very explicitly explains and very objectively covers the way in which these staff people were involved. One of whom, I can't remember who it was, was quoted as saying that they were motivated by a very special “passionate commitment.”

So in that sense, yes, I think they were “true believers.”

If I could go back a step on the lobbies. On one occasion, Hyman Bookbinder, who was one of the leaders...

Q: He was head of AIPAC.

TILLMAN: Yes, I think before.

Q: In fact, he lived on the Hill.

TILLMAN: Yes, just about lived on the Hill.

He and Sy Kenen invited me out to lunch once. It was perfectly cordial. They were very nice. I think they were hoping that I would influence Fulbright. I guess I made it pretty clear that I was on the same wavelength as Fulbright. Nothing ever came of it, I never heard from them again.

Q: It's a fascinating thing because I think now we're going through a change in our viewpoint. If one has been, particularly in Congress, for a long time, particularly our relations with the whole Middle East, I mean the Arab world. How about the Arab lobby, the Arab interests, was there anything there?

TILLMAN: Oh yes. I did see those people. They were very friendly. But they didn't have much influence. I knew people, people like John Richardson who was then the Executive

Director, (that may not have been his exact title), of the National Association of Arab Americans. There were others, but they didn't have much clout.

What we did do—and this was under McGovern, it was after Fulbright left—we had some fairly extensive hearings in that subcommittee that were balanced. We heard all view points in 1975 and in 1976.

I was able to bring others, in addition to bringing the strong supporters of Israel, whom we were glad to have. We had no wish to exclude anybody, we were grateful to be able to include the other side. But I got people like Hisham Sharabi, who's a professor here in the History Department, and Michael Hudson, who was the Director of the Center for Contemporary Arab Studies. They were friends of mine. I was able to get them before the committee. That was very helpful.

But that was not the work of the lobby. That was just my initiative with the support of Senator McGovern.

The lobbies that have real influence are the ones that tap deeply and strongly into the constituency. It's the homegrown lobbies. It's not just a matter of bringing money to bear. If it's bringing money to bear, the Saudis would have much greater influence than they have.

But the ability to tap into the constituency is decisive. To influence and to communicate with the best-organized, most highly motivated politically alert people in the constituency, is what enables a lobby to bring influence to bear.

The Jewish community is extraordinarily endowed in the United States with talent, with representation disproportionate to their numbers in leading professions whether it's from medicine to the academic world, or law to the arts. Coupled with that the strong emotional bond to Israel and you have got the basis for a very powerful and effective political lobby. Highly disproportionate to their numbers.

People ask, how can a group that represents no more than 2% of the American population, or whatever it is, bring so much influence to bear. The answer is: it's the quality of the constituency and not the numbers.

Q: I think in an interview with Pete Lakeland, that I did, he said that one time Senator Javits said, "You know, you may think the Jewish lobby is something, but wait till the Greek lobby gets stirred up." Because the Greeks are much wider spread. They're also the same, they're in the professions, also in business. They're in influential positions and they're all over the country, including the South and everywhere else. Of course, they did get stirred up over Cyprus.

So these are the two major communities. I suppose sometime looking back on this, well what about the Korean community or the Vietnamese community.

One of the elements that I like to examine as we do this, is the role of Foreign Service as seen from the perspective of the Senate staff and all. I mean, you went out on these trips. First let's do the Foreign Service and then we'll come back, you might say the people, because some of them were not Foreign Service but political appointees that appear before committees.

What was your impression on your trips of the Foreign Service officers who dealt with Middle Eastern affairs?

TILLMAN: I was very impressed with them, I thought they were a very highly qualified professional corps. I got to know quite a number of them, many of whom, as I mentioned, I have been in touch with and remained friends with through the years—like Dean Brown, Hume Horan. Bob Oakley is a specially close friend of mine, but I knew Bob and Phyllis Oakley anyway.

I thought they were a very competent group of professionals. We were largely on the same wavelength anyway. In general, on the staff level, I had good relations with the Foreign Service.

The only difficulties we ran into were by-products of Fulbright's opposition to the Vietnam War. In some cases people in embassies were very wary of us.

I remember in '65 we were in Wellington, New Zealand, for a meeting of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association. We went as observers and we had a delegation of Fulbright; Ted Moss, Democrat of Utah; Hiram Fong who was a Republican from Hawaii; and Bourke Hickenlooper of Iowa, who was the ranking Republican on the Foreign Relations Committee.

Fulbright made a speech to the Commonwealth parliamentarians that was very restrained in terms of criticism of the Vietnam policy—because he made it a point of personal policy not to address his criticisms of the American government's policies to foreign audiences, but without going to the point of endorsing policies that he could not endorse.

The Embassy was very distressed by the speech. They didn't want to reproduce it for them. I said, I don't much care if you reproduce it, I'll get the people at CPA, Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, to reproduce it. They finally did. That was the only circumstance, which was not an insignificant exception, where they would be wary of us because of Fulbright's intense opposition to the Johnson administration's, and then the Nixon administration's, policies.

But on the Middle East, I personally was a whole lot more comfortable with the Foreign Service people than I was with my Capitol Hill colleagues.

Q: As I do these interviews, one of the things that I find myself fascinated by, and I think it is, is this whole policy here. It is not just, you might say the “Jewish lobby” or something. It's much more than that, it's an emotional attachment to what I'd always considered a

small, squabby Middle Eastern country that's got a tribal dispute in it. As there are tribal disputes in Ireland and other places and all that.

But we've gotten ourselves into this. And here is a professional Foreign Service that's trying to look at this and what are American interests. Sometimes just by reporting what any objective observer, in my opinion, would say—these are our real interests or something like that. You could end up with your head in your lap.

TILLMAN: That's for sure.

Q: Did you ever find yourself up against any senators who didn't want to hear what you had to say?

TILLMAN: Yes, I certainly did. As long as Fulbright was there, I could get a respectful hearing, certainly from him. But the atmosphere is so personalized on Capitol Hill, I was sort of living under a protectorate.

Then after Fulbright left, and having been imprudently exposed on the Middle East, as I was, I was in a different situation. I was just plain dumb, to be perfectly honest about it. I was like a molting crab. I didn't have any shell. I was kicked out of that Middle East subcommittee.

McGovern kept it for 2 years and then he gave up that Middle East subcommittee.

Q: McGovern was also a senator from South Dakota and was not under the same pressure.

TILLMAN: He was balanced, what I would consider balanced. He kept that for 2 years. Much to my regret, he gave that subcommittee up. It went to Richard Stone, a Democrat from Florida, who was strongly pro-Israel.

Q: Florida, particularly by that time, has a very large Jewish constituency.

TILLMAN: I was immediately removed from that subcommittee and was replaced by Steve Bryen, who was a very ardent supporter of Israel. I was shuffled off to the Far East subcommittee. Fulbright was gone and about that time I decided that I had been there long enough. I left the committee that year.

Q: I have, again I get these little vignettes from interviews, one was I think from Dick Viets who was an Ambassador to Jordan and Tanzania. He said at one point he was talking to Senator Rudy Boschwitz, was saying something to the effect: the Israeli army didn't behave very well during the 1982 war in Lebanon or something. The senator said, "I will not listen to criticism to the Israeli army."

It's very difficult to deal with something like that.

As far as the Senate went, how did you operate within this, with Senator Fulbright and then with Senator McGovern, as far as policy. Or what would you call it? The development of the Senate's position on things in the Middle East. How would you yourself and your colleagues work on these things.

TILLMAN: It's kind of an inaccuracy to speak of a Senate position on the Middle East. There were senators' positions on the Middle East. But whether it was the Middle East or anything else, it was my relations with Fulbright that were, I think I can accurately say, very close.

We would meet in his office and discuss an issue. Occasionally I would initiate it but more commonly, he would initiate it—some issue he wanted to engage with, wanted to do more with. He'd call me in and we'd talk about it, sometimes 2 or 3 hours. Then sometimes I would end up going home with him for supper and continuing the discussion through the evening.

And then I'd go off and research it with guidelines that I'd gotten. It was never, point 1, point 2, point 3. It was always a kind of stream of consciousness carried out over 2 or 3

hours, sometimes lunch. Or Mrs. Fulbright would say, “Come on home,” and he'd take me with him. I was a bachelor at the time so I was fairly loose. We'd go home and have supper and keep on talking about it.

I really felt that I was privileged to be allowed to get to know him. Not just in the sense of getting precise, technical instructions of what I was to do with a statement. But the quality, the timbre of his mind, the drift of his thinking, his attitudinal dispositions, he really let me know him.

Q: We're talking from the period of the early 60s up through the mid-70s, when you were with Fulbright. What was his attitude towards the Middle East. How did he see what were American interests? How did he see this thing developing, where did he want it to go?

TILLMAN: He wanted it to go in the direction of a balanced relationship. But you know, all of these words are so charged. Even the term, “balanced” or “even-handed” has a kind of coded connotation, I'd hear really pro-Arab.

Q: We had one person kicked out of the Foreign Service by saying “even-handed.” I can't remember who it was. What did he want to see happen?

TILLMAN: Senator Fulbright wanted us to support Israel's survival and security but not to the point of allowing it to jeopardize what he considered, and I considered, our vital interest in the Arab world. To say nothing of the more general fact that we had no quarrel with most of the Arab countries, including the non-oil producing countries.

He had gone to the Middle East in the spring, before my time, it was either '59 or '60, I'm not sure which. He had gone to Egypt and he met with Nasser. He had a good impression of Nasser at the time. He had established a kind of rapport with President Nasser. He expanded the trip at the advice of one of his close friends, whom I'd never met, he's now dead, David Cohen. Who I guess is Jewish and I think he's from Mississippi. I forget how

they knew each other. They were good friends. David had told him, you really ought to go to Israel if you're going to Egypt, to even it.

So he went to Israel and had a very bad experience. He was invited to give a speech at the University in Tel Aviv. Because he had just been in Egypt and conferred with Nasser, the students came out holding umbrellas. He didn't know what it meant. It was explained to him that this was the symbol of Chamberlain and appeasement.

It was kind of a passive demonstration against him and I think they had to cancel his speech. He did not enjoy that. He never went again.

Q: Probably the only senator who only went once.

TILLMAN: He never went to Israel again, I'm sure of that.

He had been very critical, earlier on, of John Foster Dulles, who was very abrupt and peremptory in the cancellation of the offer to finance the Aswan Dam.

Q: Which led in part to the Suez War crisis in '56.

TILLMAN: Exactly. I mentioned earlier on this investigation of lobbying in 1962. But these were episodic. There was the '62 investigation of lobbying, earlier on there had been the trip to Israel and Egypt in 1959 or '60, whichever it was. And the opposition to Dulles's policy to Egypt and the Aswan Dam.

It was only after the speech in 1970, August of 1970, that Fulbright became, what you might call, a high-profile senator on the issue. He reiterated some of the same themes in a speech at Yale University in April 1971.

And then he caught hell on one of the Sunday interview programs, it was Meet the Press or something. Somebody asked him about the Israeli lobby. He very imprudently said that they pretty much control the Senate. They've got 70 or 80 votes, they don't need to have

them all, or something like that. That was politically impulsive. He caught a lot of hell out of that.

Then he was identified, and I by association, as far as anybody knew or cared who I was, I was identified as being on the “enemies” list.

Q: This is one of the things that runs through so many dealings, particularly the issue if you're not an ardent supporter, you're the enemy. Which makes it very difficult, I think.

When you sort of lost your protection, you were moved away. But did you find that the staff was generally objective when you were dealing with Middle Eastern affairs or not?

TILLMAN: They were more passive. They mostly were staying away from it.

Q: The hell with that.

TILLMAN: If I had to do it over again, I think I might have stayed away.

Q: A real tar baby.

What about the State Department, what was your impression when you'd have hearings. The people who would come up and testify. Were they saying one thing for the public and something else when you'd get them in private conversations? How did you find this in general.

TILLMAN: Very frequently in private conversations, we would find them much more critical of Israel and more sympathetic to the Arab side. But I really think they were more concerned with the interests of the United States and how these balanced out than they felt free to say in public hearings. They were afraid of bringing down this avalanche of condemnation on themselves, they had no way of protecting themselves from it.

But you would hear that from senators too. I'm not willing to name anybody but I encountered senators who'd say: this of course makes sense, or that of course makes sense, but of course I can't say that in public.

Q;It's a very difficult situation because you back people into a corner. You get one thing but then you may have their vote but you don't have their souls.

TILLMAN: I'll give you one little vignette which probably ought to be treated as confidential unless the senator concerned, Howard Baker, is willing to have it reported. It's just very minor but I think emblematic.

Q: He's retired. I met him last week in his law office.

TILLMAN: Is that right?

We were good friends. I liked him very much. He was one of the people I escorted to the Middle East in May of 1975. I thought he was very fair, very balanced.

I took him to see Arafat, as I'd taken McGovern to see Arafat two months earlier. But we also went to Israel and saw the senior people there, and Saudi Arabia. (I get these trips mixed up about who went to what countries.) I know that Baker went to Israel, Beirut and Saudi Arabia.

He had an audience with then Prince Fahd, now King Fahd. Anyway, we got into this discussion and the Prince was complimenting Baker very effusively on having withheld his signature from the letter of 76 senators that had been signed that spring, and that had effectively aborted President Ford's and Secretary Kissinger's attempt to reassess Middle East policy.

The senator said afterwards to us (in effect), “I appreciated the compliment but if we'd been back there, I probably would have had to sign the damn thing.”

Q: It's a fascinating play of politics. Did you find that when you talked to him with the senatorial groups and all, particularly to the Arab leaders, did they understand American politics?

TILLMAN: No, the Arab leaders had very little understanding of American politics. The Israeli leaders have a very far-ranging and deep-seated understanding of American politics.

For one thing, the Arabs, for the most part, had very little understanding of the separation of powers. They didn't really believe that the President could not control the discourse, the policy and even the Congress. They often seemed quite skeptical when you tried to explain them that he could not control it.

Q: That's interesting. Did you notice any difference between the Johnson and the Nixon administration in dealing with the Middle East. As far as you were getting from the Hill. I mean, which you were getting from the Executive branch as it reflected.

TILLMAN: I should preface it by saying I wasn't really dealing with the Middle East myself until the Nixon administration. The Johnson administration was so preoccupied, caught up in the vortex of Vietnam, that they had very little time or energy to work on the Middle East. They of course dealt with the '67 War and Security Council Resolution 242.

The Nixon administration was much more active, in the first instance, through Secretary Rogers. There was a kind of passive agreement, as I understood it, while Kissinger dominated most areas of foreign policy, Rogers was left to deal with the Middle East. They came up with the Rogers Plan in December of '69, which we thought made sense but never got off the ground.

But then Kissinger, of course, became very active, starting with the 1973 War. There was a lot of interaction between the Committee and Kissinger, and between Fulbright and

Kissinger, who had a great deal of respect for each other. I think Fulbright may have been one of those rare people whom Kissinger accepted as an intellectual equal.

Fulbright was sympathetic and supportive of Kissinger's efforts through the step-by-step diplomacy. Just getting the issue off dead center and moving it in what looked like a promising direction toward a resolution of it. Fulbright was very supportive of him and as helpful to him as he could be.

Kissinger in turn was quite helpful and supportive of Fulbright. He cooked up an excuse to stop in Little Rock during Fulbright's last campaign in 1974, very ostentatiously to consult Fulbright on something or other. Which was just for purposes of trying to help him with his election, which of course he lost.

Q: You were right in the middle of Middle Eastern affairs in '73. It was October 73 during that war, the 73 War, when the Egyptians and the Syrians attacked Israel and made some gains. How did that impact? Did that change anything or not? I mean as far as how the Senate and the staff, or anything else, looking at things.

TILLMAN: The '73 War mobilized an interest to a very great degree. And it activated an appreciation of dealing with the oil-producing states. You know that oil embargo made a very powerful impact during that fall and winter of 1973-74.

There were a fair amount of hearings at that time, I can't recall precise ones, involving Kissinger. Kissinger reported on what he was doing with the shuttle diplomacy, on the succession of disengagement agreements, first with Egypt and then with Syria, and then on the second Sinai disengagement in '75.

It activated them. The committee got into a kind of tangential controversy with the Ford administration over the second Sinai disengagement agreement which came in September of 1975. The legislation that was put before the Congress was effectively confined, if I remember correctly, to authorizing the assignment of American technicians to Sinai.

The legislation did not constitute an endorsement of all of the collateral agreements. And, if I remember correctly, the enactment explicitly disavowed any endorsement of all of the collateral agreements, including the promises of special aid to Israel, including the promise that we would not deal with the PLO until and unless they recognized Israel and the permanence of the state of Israel and Security Council Resolution 242.

There is of course no institutional memory there. They later held the administration strictly to the letter of that agreement which they had, if I remember correctly, explicitly disavowed. Not in the sense that they didn't agree with it, but they made it clear they were not endorsing anything of this sort when they enacted that legislation.

But the issue that they got involved in was whether these agreements were technically executive agreements, something looser and less formal than that. I was on the outs by then and I didn't really know what happened. I knew what happened as far as I was involved, but I was doing the staff work. Fulbright was gone by then, it was the fall of 1975.

I wrote the committee's report on that legislation and it was a pretty straightforward report. I pretty much summarized, with no particular enthusiasm, to be perfectly honest, the proceedings of the committee about whether these were or were not executive agreements. I handed in my draft report. All of these things happened very fast—committee reports on some occasions can be written, approved and filed by the next morning.

The next morning, a completely different report was filed. It was a very perfunctory report with a different focus on it that I knew nothing about. What I think happened, what I'm reasonably sure happened, was that Steve Bryen, who was Clifford Case's man, a very ardent supporter of Israel, for some reason didn't like that report.

He'd come to see me and tell me that all this emphasis on executive agreements wasn't right. I guess I wasn't as tactful as I should have been. I think I brushed him off—told him

if he didn't like it he could talk to the Chief of Staff—I don't remember what, I brushed him off.

I submitted the report. It was no theme of mine, I was just reporting what the committee had done. And I didn't want anybody with a special interest to come in and tell me what I ought to put into my report, in my capacity as a professional. Anyway, I guess he got it shot down because they filed a different report which was very perfunctory in nature.

This whole issue agitates me every time I think about it.

I never complained, I didn't say anything, I was never told anything about it, but I was very agitated.

Q: That's sort of the time when you left, wasn't it?

TILLMAN: No, I didn't leave then, that was fall of '75. I didn't leave until the summer of '77.

Q: You were in the Far Eastern committee for awhile?

TILLMAN: A very short time.

Q: Not really time to make your mark.

TILLMAN: I didn't like the Foreign Relations Committee after Fulbright left. I thought it disintegrated very badly. It lost central direction and control.

Q: Also, you didn't have Fulbright. Today it's a little hard to figure out who is running it, and what it means.

After you left in '77, what did you do?

TILLMAN: I went to the American Enterprise Institute for 2 years and I wrote a book on American policy in the Middle East.

Q: How was that received?

TILLMAN: It got good reviews generally. It's one of those “Choice” books for academic persons, published by the University of Indiana press, called The United States and The Middle East Interests and Obstacles. Foreign Affairs gave it a good review. It was pretty well received.

Q: So you were at the American Enterprise for 2 years.

TILLMAN: Then I went back to the Hill for one year, not on the committee staff, I was with McGovern. Then he got defeated. About that time I asked Peter Krogh for a job.

Q: Peter Krogh was the Dean of the School of Foreign Service here at Georgetown.

What is your impression, obviously you're teaching, you live in Washington, dealing with foreign affairs, what is your impression of the foreign affairs staff today? Their influence, their outlook, how do you see the staff operation?

TILLMAN: The Senate Foreign Relations Committee?

Q: Senate foreign relations as compared to your experiences at the time you were on there. We're talking about today.

You're talking about the staff on the Foreign Relations Committee now, your impressions of how they operate, caliber.

TILLMAN: A committee is inevitably shaped by the character of its leadership. A staff can be no stronger or no more productive than the membership, particularly the Chair. Claiborne Pell is a very nice honorable decent man, but he's not a strong Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee. I think he's seriously hobbled by having Jesse Helms as his ranking Minority member.

Q: Who is a very arch conservative from North Carolina.

TILLMAN: And very much committed to his personal agenda, personally, I think very irresponsible. I know some of the staff people, I know some of the junior ones whom I think are very talented people. One of my former students, Michelle Maynard, is there now. I think she's doing a very good job. A younger guy by the name of George Picard, whom I know.

Some of the ones I knew best have left. John Ritch, who was there when I was there, is now Ambassador to the UN agencies in Vienna. Peter Galbraith is now Ambassador in Croatia.

I don't really know most of them. I do think in general the staffs have gotten too big, they've gotten partisan which we were not. Not that we didn't have personal partisan convictions but we were not a partisan staff. We were pretty small. We were disciplined in terms of staying out of domestic politics. We were given to understand, and mostly did understand, that it was the senators and not we who represented people. We were working for them.

I think a lot of that is broken down, not just on the Foreign Relations committee staff but on most committee staffs.

I think the House Foreign Affairs Committee is under very good leadership. Lee Hamilton is as good a chairman as we've had in a long time. Michael Van Dusen, who is his staff director, is one of the top professionals on Capitol Hill and, incidentally, a Middle East expert. I don't know very much about what they're doing but I have the impression that that is a well-run committee and a well-staffed committee.

Senate Foreign Relations doesn't seem to me to carry much weight or influence or force anymore.

Q: It doesn't. These things wax and wane. One doesn't say: Where does Senator Pell stand on something. It's just Jesse Helms being an obstructionist and not very positive. We're trying to capture the spirit of the times on these things.

TILLMAN: I neglected to mention that I was with Senator McGovern in Saudi Arabia at the time that King Faisal was assassinated in March of 1975. We had gotten on a plane in Jeddah to go to Riyadh where he was to have an audience with King Faisal.

When we got off the plane there was an awful lot of agitated running around. We were told that the interview had been canceled, we were duly informed that the King had been killed that morning.Jim Akins was the Ambassador. He, at that time, I believe, sent a message back to Washington suggesting that Senator McGovern, since he was there, be designated as the American representative at the funeral.

Q: Because they have to have a funeral within 24 hours in the Arab world.

TILLMAN: President Ford did not designate him, he sent Vice President Rockefeller instead.

They hustled us out, I remember Jim Akins was really eager to get us out of there. We hustled right out and went back to Jeddah.

End of interview